United Nations S/2004/145

Security Council

Distr.: General
25 February 2004
English
Original: French

Letter dated 25 February 2004 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Following our consultations this morning, I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement issued by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, Dominique de Villepin. I should be very grateful if you could circulate it as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Jean-Marc **de La Sablière**

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Annex to the letter dated 25 February 2004 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: English and French]

Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, Dominique de Villepin, on the situation in Haiti

25 February 2004

The situation in Haiti is continuing to deteriorate.

A race in under way between those who support violence and those who are still hoping for a peaceful solution. Haiti is now threatened with chaos. It is the duty of the international community to assume its responsibility to preserve the country from disorder and violence.

I have spoken several times yesterday and today with Colin Powell, other foreign colleagues and several Haitian political leaders. I will in theory be meeting with representatives of the two parties in Paris this Friday. The path we tread is a narrow one, for we must take into account both democratic and constitutional principles, refusing to let force have the last word and facing reality such as it is: the regime has reached an impasse and has already departed from constitutional legality.

What, in this context, should be the objective of the international community? A political solution must be defined that brings together all those forces in the country that refuse to return to its darkest hours.

To achieve this, the best formula remains the establishment of a transitional Government of national unity presided over by a prime minister designated according to the CARICOM plan. But to break the current impasse, the political process must be revived with an accelerated timetable: that is why, if this transition Government, representing a large national majority, should decide to proceed with the required elections before the summer, France will provide the necessary support.

France is prepared to play a full role in the international mobilization effort. To that end, it proposes an initiative that broadens the CARICOM plan. The initiative would be structured around the following points:

- The immediate establishment of a civilian peacekeeping force. This international force would be responsible for guaranteeing the return to public order and supporting the international community's action on the ground. It would provide support for a Government of national unity
- International assistance for preparing the presidential election by establishing an electoral commission, instituting legitimate voter registration rolls and organizing international observer missions
- The delivery of international humanitarian aid
- The dispatch of human rights observers
- A long-term commitment to providing international aid for the economic and social reconstruction of the country

All of the above must be legitimized and implemented by the international community.

- Our proposals could be submitted to the OAS and CARICOM and the plan, thus strengthened, could be conveyed to the United Nations for adoption by the Security Council.

- It would then be up to the Secretary-General of the United Nations to appoint a special representative who would be in charge of implementing the plan on the ground and, more particularly, coordinating among the various organizations that would be induced to intervene, such as the Red Cross, the Commission on Human Rights and NGOs.

- This international mobilization could involve regional organizations (OAS, CARICOM) as well as the various United Nations bodies and the European Union.

While there is not yet reason to lose hope, the threat of growing violence in Haiti today is real. Too much blood has already spilled, however, and we must interrupt this spiral.

That is why France is calling on everyone to respond urgently:

- The churches have an important role to play, and we invite them to renew their efforts.

- The political opposition must open a new phase of negotiations.

- As for President Aristide, he bears heavy responsibility for the current situation. It is up to him to accept the consequences while respecting the rule of law. It is his decision; it is his responsibility. Everyone can clearly see that a new page must be turned over in Haiti's history, while the dignity and integrity of all the protagonists must be respected.